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THE FRENCH DECISION ON NUCLEAR EXPORTS

ANNCR: VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY DISCUSSES FRANCE'S DECISION ON THE EXPORT OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY:

VOICE: ON THURSDAY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL NO LONGER ENTER INTO BI-LATERAL AGREEMENTS TO EXPORT NUCLEAR FUEL-PROCESSING PLANTS. BY DOING SO, THE FRENCH HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE GROWING INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO CHECK THE SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND THE SUBSEQUENT DANGER OF A NUCLEAR WAR.

FRANCE WILL, OF COURSE, CONTINUE TO SELL NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS TO OTHER COUNTRIES. BUT IT GUARANTEES TO PROVIDE A CONTINUING SUPPLY OF FUEL TO KEEP THESE PLANTS GOING. THIS MAKES IT UNNECESSARY FOR THE RECIPIENT COUNTRY TO RE-PROCESS THE SPENT FUEL---A REPROCESSING WHICH RESULTS IN THE PRODUCTION OF PLUTONIUM, FROM WHICH NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE MADE.

THE FRENCH ANNOUNCEMENT WAS WELCOMED HERE IN WASHINGTON, WHERE CONCERN ABOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROLIFERATION HAS BECOME A HIGH PRIORITY ITEM BOTH WITH PRESIDENT FORD AND WITH PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER. IN A MAJOR STATEMENT IN OCTOBER MR. FORD CALLED FOR NEW INITIATIVES TO DEAL WITH WHAT HE CALLED "THE PROBLEM OF PLUTONIUM." AND MR. CARTER SAID AT A RECENT NEWS CONFERENCE THAT HE HOPED THE SALE OF PLUTONIUM PROCESSING PLANTS BY BOTH FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY WOULD BE ABROGATED. THE UNITED STATES WAS MOST IMMEDIATELY CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMMINENT SALE TO PAKISTAN OF FRENCH REPROCESSING EQUIPMENT. AND WHILE THURSDAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT MADE NO MENTION OF THE PAKISTAN AGREEMENT, NEWS REPORTS SAY THAT FRENCH SOURCES INDICATED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO OBJECTIONS IF PAKISTAN CANCELLED THE ORDER.

AS FOR WEST GERMANY, IT IS BELIEVED THAT FRANCE'S ACTION MAY HELP PERSUADE THE BONN GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER TAKING A SIMILAR POSITION.

THE FRENCH ANNOUNCEMENT IS ALL THE MORE WELCOME IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT FRANCE HAS NEVER SIGNED THE NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY AND HAS AT TIMES SEEMED DETERMINED TO FOLLOW A NON-COOPERATIVE NUCLEAR COURSE. BUT IN AN EARLIER STATEMENT---LAST OCTOBER---A CHANGE IN THAT COURSE WAS SIGNALLED. IT WAS MADE CLEAR THAT FRANCE INTENDED TO REMAIN IN CONTROL OF ITS NUCLEAR EXPORT POLICY---BUT WAS ALSO READY TO CONSIDER EITHER BILATERAL OR MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS ESTABLISHING GREATER SAFEGUARDS ON THE EXPORT OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY. THE ANNOUNCEMENT MADE IN PARIS THURSDAY INDICATES THAT THE FRENCH ARE SERIOUS ABOUT THIS, AND ARE PREPARED TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE CAUSE OF INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR CONTROLS.

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